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UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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BEFORE THE BOARD OF PATENT APPEALS  
AND INTERFERENCES

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*Ex parte RANDALL A. ADDINGTON, W. ROBERT ADDINGTON,  
and W. ROBERT ADDINGTON, II*

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Appeal 2009-011015  
Application 10/604,853  
Technology Center 3700

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Decided: June 22, 2010

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Before WILLIAM F. PATE III, STEVEN D.A. McCARTHY  
and MICHAEL W. O'NEILL, *Administrative Patent Judges.*

McCARTHY, *Administrative Patent Judge.*

DECISION ON APPEAL

1 STATEMENT OF THE CASE

2 The Appellants appeal under 35 U.S.C. § 134 from the Examiner's  
3 decision finally rejecting claims 1-4, 6-16, 18, 19 and 21-33 under 35 U.S.C.  
4 § 102(b) as being anticipated by Calentine (US 4,062,540, issued Dec. 13,

1 1977); and finally rejecting claims 5, 17 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as  
2 being unpatentable over Calentine and Pugh (US 3,728,736, issued Apr. 24,  
3 1973).<sup>1</sup> In the Answer, the Examiner withdrew rejections of claims 2, 3, 15  
4 and 20-33 under 35 U.S.C. § 101 as being directed to non-statutory subject  
5 matter as well as rejections of claims 2, 3, 15 and 20-33 under 35 U.S.C.  
6 § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. We have jurisdiction under 35  
7 U.S.C. § 6(b).

8       We AFFIRM.

9           Before discussing the merits of the rejections of claims 1-33, we  
10 briefly address the state of the record. The Appellants filed Appellants'  
11 Appeal Brief October 31, 2005 and supplemented the Appeal Brief on  
12 January 26, 2009. The Examiner mailed an Answer on September 13, 2007  
13 and supplemented the Answer on January 21, 2009.

14           The Appellants filed a Reply Brief on September 24, 2007. The  
15 Examiner refused entry of the Reply Brief on January 21, 2009 because the  
16 proffered Reply Brief included new or non-admitted evidence, namely,  
17 Schaffer (US 4,371,163, issued Feb. 1, 1983). *See* 37 C.F.R. §§ 41.41(a)(2)  
18 and 41.41(b) (2005). The Appellants filed a second Reply Brief on January  
19 26, 2009. The Examiner declined to enter the second Reply Brief because

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<sup>1</sup>       Although the Examiner denominated the rejections of claims 5, 17 and 20 as being over Calentine alone, the Examiner cited Pugh as evidence supportive of the existence of an apparent reason for modifying the teachings of Calentine in the fashion claimed. (Final Rejection, mailed Jul. 25, 2005 at 4). Since the Appellants argued the rejections as being based on the combined teachings of Calentine and Pugh (*see* App. Br. 25), we have considered the teachings of Pugh together with those of Calentine in reviewing the rejections of claim 5, 17 and 20 under § 103(a). *See In re Hoch*, 428 F.2d 1341, 1342 n.3 (CCPA 1970).

1 the second proffered Reply Brief was non-responsive to the refusal to enter  
2 the first proffered Reply Brief.

3       The Examiner's refusal to enter the two proffered Reply Briefs is  
4 subject to review by petition rather than by a panel of the Board. *Cf. In re*  
5 *Mindick*, 371 F.2d 892, 894 (CCPA 1967)(holding that an examiner's refusal  
6 to enter an amendment after final rejection is subject to review by petition  
7 and not by a panel of the Board). For this reason, we have not considered  
8 any arguments made by the Appellants in either of the proffered Reply  
9 Briefs that were not made in the Appeal Brief.

10       In the Final Office Action mailed July 25, 2005, which will be  
11 referred to as "Final Rejection." the Examiner rejected claims 1-4, 6-16, 18,  
12 19 and 21-33 under § 102(b) as being anticipated by Calentine. Claim 1 is  
13 illustrative of the appealed claims:

14           1. A system of interlocking surfaces on bowler's  
15 finger pad cover and on a bowling ball finger hole  
16 insert for producing a force to counteract shifting  
17 of the ball relative to the bowler's finger pad and  
18 the contact area made between the finger pad cover  
19 and the finger hole insert, comprising:  
20           a. first means for mounting an interlocking three  
21 dimensional surface on a finger pad;  
22           b. second means for mounting an interlocking  
23 three dimensional surface on the finger hole of a  
24 bowling ball;  
25           c. said first and second means for co-acting to  
26 produce a counter force opposed to movement of  
27 said first means relative to said second means.

28       In the Final Rejection, the Examiner identified structure in Calentine  
29 corresponding to the first and second means recited in claim 1. The

1 Examiner further concluded that structure described in Calentine was  
2 substantially identical to the claimed structure, giving rise to an unrebutted  
3 rebuttable presumption that the first and second means in the structure  
4 described by Calentine necessarily had the property of being capable of co-  
5 acting in the manner recited in clause “c” of claim 1. (Final Rejection 3-4).

6 In the Answer, the Examiner identified different structure in Calentine  
7 corresponding to the second means recited in claim 1. (Ans. 3). Instead of  
8 relying on the rebuttable presumption that the first and second means in the  
9 structure described by Calentine necessarily had the property of being  
10 capable of co-acting in the manner recited in clause “c” of claim 1 due to  
11 substantial structural identity, the Examiner introduced an explanatory  
12 reference as evidence that the first and second means in the structure  
13 described by Calentine necessarily had this property. (Ans. 4).

14 The thrust of the rejections of claims 1-4, 6-12, 14-16, 18, 19, 21-26,  
15 28-30, 32 and 33 under § 102(b) as being anticipated by Calentine changed  
16 sufficiently between the Final Rejection and the Answer that the rejection in  
17 the Answer constituted new grounds. *Cf. In re Kronig*, 539 F.2d 1300, 1303  
18 (CCPA 1976)(holding that the Board’s reasoning did not constitute a new  
19 ground of rejection where “the basic thrust of the rejection at the examiner  
20 and board level was the same.”). The Appellants were not advised that new  
21 grounds of rejection had been entered and that the entry of the new grounds  
22 of rejection might impact the effect of failing to file a compliant Reply Brief.  
23 For this reason, we exercise our discretion to disregard the new grounds of  
24 rejection and the new explanatory reference entered in support of the new  
25 grounds of rejection. We review and sustain the rejections of claims 1-4, 6-  
26 16, 18, 19 and 21-33 under § 102(b) as set forth in the Final Rejection.

1        In the Final Rejection, the Examiner rejected claims 13, 27 and 31  
2 under § 102(b) as being anticipated by Calentine. In the Answer, the same  
3 claims were rejected instead under § 103(a) as being unpatentable over  
4 Calentine. This change in the thrust of the rejections of claims 13, 27 and 31  
5 also constitutes new grounds of rejection. We exercise our discretion to  
6 disregard the new grounds of rejection. We review and sustain the rejections  
7 of claims 13, 27 and 31 under § 102(b) as set forth in the Final Rejection.

8

9

## ISSUES

10       The Examiner has aptly summarized the positions taken in the  
11 Appellants' Appeal Brief and the Examiner's Answer regarding the  
12 rejections under § 102(b):

13              Appellant[s'] arguments on pgs. 20-25 [of  
14 the Appeal Brief] amount to a general allegation  
15 that the claims define a patentable invention  
16 without specifically pointing out how the language  
17 of the claims patentably distinguishes them from  
18 the references. Instead, [Appellants reprint] copies  
19 of the claims with underlined portions and [state]  
20 that such [that is, the underlined claim language] is  
21 not shown. . . . Examiner's position with respect to  
22 each limitation in the claims is explicitly set forth  
23 above in the Grounds for Rejection.

24 (Ans. 13).

25       With respect to the rejections of claims 5, 17 and 20 under § 103(a),  
26 the Examiner's Answer concludes that,

27              while Calentine fails to show covering of the  
28 finger tip, finger tip gloves and gloves without  
29 finger tip[s] are well known depending upon the  
30 users desired amounts of protection. In bowling,  
31 full finger inserts are known as shown by Pugh.

1           To have included a means for covering the finger  
2           tip of Calentine would have been obvious in order  
3           to afford protection to the fingertip during  
4           bowling.

5       (Ans. 11). The Appellants argue in the Appeal Brief that:

6           The reason given for rejection, that it would have  
7           been obvious, is a conclusion without any support  
8           in record fact and does not explain how Pugh or  
9           Calentin[e], teaches or discloses any claimed  
10          combination. . . . There is no competent record  
11          evidence showing any teaching of combining any  
12          element of Pugh with the elements of the recited  
13          claimed invention of claims 5, 17, and 20.

14       (App. Br. 25).

15           Only issues and findings of fact contested by the Appellants have  
16          been considered in this opinion. *See Ex Parte Frye*, 94 USPQ2d 1072,  
17          1075-76 (BPAI 2010). This Appeal turns on two issues:

18           *First*, has the Examiner shown where Calentine discloses  
19          limitations of claims 1-4, 6-16, 18 and 21, underlined in those  
20          claims as reproduced in pages 20-23 of the Appeal Brief?<sup>2</sup>

21           *Second*, has the Examiner articulated reasoning with  
22          some rational underpinning sufficient to support the conclusion  
23          that the subject matter of claims 5, 17 and 20 would have been  
24          obvious?

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<sup>2</sup>       The Appellants also argue that Calentine “does not disclose the recited elements of method claims 22 to 23, dependent from claim 21 or the system claims 24 to 33.” (App. Br. 24). This statement lacks sufficient specificity to determine the errors which the Appellants perceive in the rejections of these claims. Furthermore, since nothing is underlined in claim 19 as reproduced on page 23 of the Appeal Brief, it is presumed that the Appellants intended claim 19 to stand or fall with its parent claim 14.

## FINDINGS OF FACT

2 We adopt and incorporate by reference the Examiner's findings at  
3 page 3, lines 18-26 of the Final Rejection. We also adopt and incorporate by  
4 reference the Examiner's findings (*see* Final Rejection at 4) that "[f]inger tip  
5 gloves and gloves without finger tip[s] were] well known depending upon the  
6 user[']s desired amounts of protection. In bowling full finger inserts [were  
7 well] known as shown by Pugh."

8           We adopt and incorporate by reference the Examiner's findings at  
9   page 4, line 7 through page 7, line 6; page 7, line 9 through page 8, line 5;  
10   and page 8, lines 11-14 of the Answer.

We agree with the Examiner that use of the structure described by Calentine necessarily would produce the counterforce recited in clause “c” of claim 1 and further limited in claims 2 and 3. Figures 4a-4c of the Appellants’ drawings depict an example of co-acting or interlocking three dimensional surfaces on the inner surface 14 of a finger hole insert 12 and on a finger pad cover 31. The example includes first means, namely, the finger pad cover 31, for mounting an interlocking three dimensional surface 35 including hemispheric protrusions 49a and 49b' on the finger pad cover 31; and a second means, namely, a bowling ball 10 with a finger hole insert 11 inserted in a finger hole 12, for mounting an interlocking three dimensional surface 15 including hemispheric depressions 49a and 49b on the finger hole 12 of the bowling ball 10. (Spec., ¶ 0038; *see also* App. Br. 1-2 (identifying structure described in the Specification corresponding to the first and second means)).

25 The Examiner finds that Calentine discloses first means, namely, a  
26 thumb piece 10, for mounting an interlocking three dimensional surface,

1 namely, the three dimensional surface of the finger pad or thumb piece 10  
2 including frictional inserts 28, 30, shown as hemispheric in the drawing  
3 figures, on the thumb piece 10; and a second means, namely, a bowling ball  
4 18 with a finger hole insert or sleeve 14 inserted in a finger hole or thumb  
5 hole 16, for mounting an interlocking three dimensional surface of the sleeve  
6 14 including a circumferentially disposed slot 70 on the thumb hole 16 of the  
7 bowling ball 18. (Ans. 3; *see also* Calentine, col. 4, ll. 50-57 and col. 5, ll.  
8 29-39). Based on these facts, the Examiner correctly found (*see* Ans. 3) that  
9 the first and second means disclosed by Calentine are at least substantially  
10 identical to the first and second means recited in claim 1.

11 “Where, as here, the claimed and prior art products are identical or  
12 substantially identical, . . . the [Patent and Trademark Office] can require an  
13 applicant to prove that the prior art products do not necessarily or inherently  
14 possess the characteristics of [the applicant’s] product.” *In re Best*, 562 F.2d  
15 1252, 1255 (CCPA 1977). One such characteristic which may be shown to  
16 be inherent in a prior art product is the capacity to perform a function. Thus:

17  
18 where the Patent [and Trademark] Office has  
19 reason to believe that a functional limitation  
20 asserted to be critical for establishing novelty in  
21 the claimed subject matter may, in fact, be an  
22 inherent characteristic of the prior art, it possesses  
23 the authority to require the applicant to prove that  
24 the subject matter shown to be in the prior art does  
25 not possess the characteristic relied on.

26  
27 *Id.* at 1254-55 (quoting *In re Swinehart*, 439 F.2d 210, 212-213 (CCPA  
28 1971)).

1        Here, the Examiner properly found that the first and second means  
2 disclosed in Calentine were substantially identical to the first and second  
3 means recited in claim 1. Based on this finding, the Examiner inferred that  
4 the first and second means disclosed in Calentine were capable of  
5 performing the same functions performed by the first and second means  
6 recited in claim 1, namely, the function recited in clause “c” of claim 1 and  
7 further limited in claims 2 and 3. The Examiner as fact-finder placed the  
8 Appellants on notice that this inference shifted the burden of producing  
9 evidence to show that the first and second means disclosed by Calentine  
10 were incapable of performing this function. (Final Rejection 3-4). The  
11 Appellants did not respond with either argument or additional evidence  
12 persuasive that the inference was improper. For these reasons, we adopt the  
13 Examiner’s inference as fact. For similar reasons, we agree with the  
14 Examiner that Calentine discloses “means for developing a counter force to  
15 a force intersecting with said longitudinal axis” as recited in claim 15.

## ANALYSIS

18 *First Issue*

19 The Appellants contend that the Examiner has not shown where  
20 Calentine discloses limitations of claims 1-4, 6-16, 18 and 21 underlined in  
21 those claims as reproduced in pages 20-23 of the Appeal Brief. The  
22 Examiner details findings concerning where Calentine discloses these  
23 limitations at page 3, lines 18-26 of the Final Rejection as well as at page 4,  
24 line 7 through page 7, line 6; page 7, line 9 through page 8, line 5; and page  
25 8, lines 11-14 of the Answer. The Appellants provide no persuasive reason  
26 why these findings might be incorrect.

1    *Second Issue*

2           The Appellants contend that “[t]he reason given for rejection, that it  
3       would have been obvious, is a conclusion without any support in record fact  
4       and does not explain how Pugh or Calentin[e], teaches or discloses any  
5       claimed combination.” (App. Br. 25). In order to establish a prima facie  
6       case that a claim is obvious based on teachings of prior art references, the  
7       Examiner also must articulate some “reasoning with some rational  
8       underpinning to support the legal conclusion of obviousness.” *In re Kahn*,  
9       441 F.3d 977, 988 (Fed. Cir 2006). This “reasoning with some rational  
10      underpinning” must identify some apparent reason for combining the prior  
11      art elements in the fashion claimed. The use of common sense as a  
12      component of the apparent reason for combining the prior art elements “does  
13      not require a ‘specific hint or suggestion in a particular reference,’ only a  
14      reasoned explanation that avoids conclusory generalizations.” *Perfect Web*  
15      *Techs., Inc. v. InfoUSA, Inc.*, 587 F.3d 1324, 1329 (Fed. Cir. 2009)(quoting  
16      *DyStar Textilfarben GmbH v. C.H. Patrick Co.*, 464 F.3d 1356, 1366 (Fed.  
17      Cir. 2006)).

18           The apparent reason proposed by the Examiner for having combined  
19      the teachings of Calentine and Pugh is not conclusory. The reasoning  
20      articulates a matter of common sense, namely, that it was desirable to afford  
21      protection to the fingertip during bowling, which together with the teachings  
22      of Pugh bridges the differences between the claimed subject matter and the  
23      prior art. The apparent reason proposed by the Examiner is valid even  
24      assuming, as the Appellants appear to argue, that neither Calentine nor Pugh  
25      has an express teaching to modify Calentine’s structure as claimed in claims  
26      5, 17 and 20.

## CONCLUSIONS

2 The Examiner has shown where Calentine discloses limitations of  
3 claims 1-4, 6-16, 18 and 21, underlined in those claims as reproduced in  
4 pages 20-23 of the Appeal Brief.

5 The Examiner has articulated reasoning with some rational  
6 underpinning sufficient to support the conclusion that the subject matter of  
7 claims 5, 17 and 20 would have been obvious.

8           We sustain the rejections of claims 1-4, 6-16, 18, 19 and 21-33 under  
9   35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Calentine and the rejections of  
10   claims 5, 17 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over  
11   Calentine and Pugh.

## DECISION

14 We AFFIRM the decision of the Examiner to reject claims 1-33.

15           No time period for taking any subsequent action in connection with  
16   this appeal may be extended under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a). *See* 37 C.F.R.  
17   § 1.136(a)(1)(iv) (2007).

AFFIRMED

22 mls

24  
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